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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 004153

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/10/2015

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SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED'S PARIS MEETING WITH
CHIRAC DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR GOURDAULT-MONTAGNE

Classified By: Charge d'affaires Alex Wolff for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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1. (C) Summary: A Europe turned inward in the wake of the rejection of the EU constitution by voters in France and the Netherlands would set back U.S.- EU cooperation in meeting global challenges, and would be unwelcome, visiting Assistant Secretary Daniel Fried told President Chirac's Diplomatic

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Advisor Maurice Gourdault Montagne in Paris June 7. President Bush wants a strong Europe as a partner and has worked for two years to overcome our differences over Iraq and refocus our energies on a shared agenda -- this is not the moment to abandon the progress we've made, Fried continued. Europe's enlargement has helped knit the continent together and offered hope to populations long denied democratic freedoms and economic prosperity. It cannot now remove the hope of a European future which serves as an incentive for positive change in the Western Balkans, Turkey, and newly emerging democracies in the former Soviet Space, like Ukraine. Responding, Gourdault-Montagne said that France and Europe would remain engaged with the U.S., but at the same time, European leaders could not ignore the message their publics were sending in voting down the constitution. Europe will have to absorb its most recent, 10-member enlargement and move more deliberately on future enlargements, including those of Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia. Ukraine, Georgia and others to the east will benefit from a strengthened association with the EU but not membership, for now. End summary.

2. (C) Assistant Secretary Fried met in Paris June 7 with Elysee Diplomatic Advisor Maurice Gourdault-Montagne. Participants included:

U.S.

A/S Fried
Charge Alex Wolff
Acting DAS Kathy Allegrone
A/POL Paul Mailhot (notetaker)

France

Diplomatic Advisor Gourdault-Montagne
Elysee Advisor on North American and Middle Eastern Affairs
Dominique Boche

3. (C) A/S Fried said he had come to France, Italy and Germany to make clear that the U.S. did not welcome the rejection of the European constitution by French and Dutch voters. We hoped that it would not cause Europe to enter "a long period of introspection," or lose the will to pursue our common agenda around the world. The Administration, and particularly Secretary Rice, hoped that a confident Europe would continue to offer the prospect of a European future to the countries of the Western Balkans, the states bordering the EU to the east, and to Turkey. That possibility acted as a powerful incentive for continuing democratic and economic reform in those countries -- a process that the U.S. and the EU want to continue. A long pause while Europe looked inward could shake confidence in these countries in the course they have chosen. This would certainly be a topic of discussion at the U.S.- EU summit scheduled for June 21-22.

4. (C) Recalling that he had been in Washington the previous week and talked with NSA Hadley about good U.S.- French cooperation on Lebanon, Gourdault-Montagne said this kind of cooperation would certainly continue. France has appreciated the U.S. public and private reaction to the French and Dutch votes. Washington's persistent refusal to be drawn into public speculation about the future of Europe in the wake of the referendum votes has helped European leaders manage the aftermath. Europe has experienced set-backs before during its 50-year history of step-by-step integration, Gourdault-Montagne went on. It will continue to function on the basis of the existing treaties. The constitution, in the view of the GOF, represented an improvement. But it was rejected by the people, and this cannot be ignored or regretted. The reasons for the rejection were numerous in France, and many had nothing to do with the specific provisions of the constitution. "People answered other

questions," Gourdault-Montagne said, but their essential message seemed to be one of unease over their current economic situation, and particularly over persistent high unemployment in France (currently at about 10.2 percent). They feared that their jobs were endangered by competition from low-labor-cost producing nations and that their social welfare protections were under attack from a Brussels bureaucracy they did not trust. The vote, in that sense, was a "no to existing systems," Gourdault-Montagne said.

15. (C) Immigration was also a concern, but to a far lesser extent in France than in the Netherlands, Gourdault-Montagne went on. The prospect of Turkey's eventual entry into the EU and the consequent influx of Turkish residents into established EU countries certainly influenced voters in the Netherlands and was an important issue in France very early in the referendum campaign. Chirac essentially neutralized the potential negative vote over Turkey by passing legislation making it compulsory that any future enlargement (after Romania and Bulgaria) be approved by referendum in France. Nevertheless, the mounting evidence that France's integration of its mostly North African Muslim population is not working also makes immigration a focus of popular concern in France.

16. (C) The French and Dutch votes are forcing the EU to consider whether the ratification process should continue, Gourdault-Montagne said. The treaty stipulates that if by the end of the ratification process on November 1, 2006 one or more states have not accepted the treaty, the European Council will consider next steps. Ten countries have already ratified the treaty; "we cannot tell them that their votes don't count," Gourdault-Montagne said. So, despite pressure for a "suspension" or abandonment of the ratification process, France believes it is important to go on, Gourdault-Montagne concluded. But the courses now open to the EU are few. Might a new French government decide to put the same question to French voters again -- in a rerun of the referendum as was done in Denmark and Ireland following their rejection of earlier treaties? This cannot be ruled out, Gourdault-Montagne said, but the chances of any French government embarking on that path are slim. Alternatively, the EU could decide to renegotiate the treaty, but here the possibility of agreement among the 25 is almost nonexistent. A more likely course might be to attempt to reach agreement at 25 on implementing elements of the constitution that are, in effect, extensions of provisions already in existing treaties. These questions will be at the top of the agenda for the concluding summit of the Luxembourg presidency on June 16-17.

17. (C) The votes, with their clear indication of uneasiness over the continued expansion of the EU, will certainly cause the EU to move more deliberately on future enlargements, Gourdault-Montagne said. In a climate in which voters worried about the flight of jobs to new member states in Central and Eastern Europe and the possible influx of low-paid workers from the east (the proverbial "Polish plumber"), French voters resented not having been directly consulted on the most recent, 10-member enlargement. Instead, agreement to that historic enlargement occurred after just two days of debate in the National Assembly "and no one even noticed," Gourdault-Montagne said. Bulgaria and Romania are well along in the process, but EU members are now likely to insist on full compliance with the *acquis* as a condition for membership. This may impact Romania, which has been slow to amend its criminal justice code, and Bulgaria, because no one wants to "decouple" the two. France, Germany and Austria were pushing hardest for progress on Croatia's candidacy and are not likely to change this basic orientation, believing that prospective membership is fostering political change in Croatia. But the process for Croatia and other Western Balkans countries is likely to slow down.

18. (C) Expansion to other states on the eastern borders of the EU poses problems, particularly in the case of Ukraine, "a huge country," Gourdault-Montagne said. There are essentially no clearly defined European borders and EU enlargement could theoretically "go on forever" as long as these states are solidifying their democracies. But there is no public support for such a limitless enlargement policy and thus distinctions will have to be made. For Ukraine, this could mean close association with the EU in a "reinforced neighborhood," but not membership, Gourdault-Montagne said. A/S Fried suggested that it would be unwise to succumb to the temptation of drawing permanent borders around the EU's current members and noted that no one is talking about Ukraine or others in the neighborhood coming into the EU tomorrow. Gourdault-Montagne conceded the point, saying that France's conception of Europe is "not closed." However, there is a clear need to pause and absorb the most recent enlargement, he added. "Let us swallow and digest," he said. "If not, we will explode."

19. (C) Another temptation to avoid, A/S Fried went on, is to

externalize the EU's problems by casting the U.S. as an adversary and precipitating conflict with us. This would undo all of the patient work of the last two years to repair the damage caused by our disagreement over Iraq policy. We are now cooperating in exemplary fashion in many parts of the world to our mutual benefit and we have good, workable arrangements for EU-NATO cooperation. Gourdault-Montagne said he saw no desire among EU leaders to put the U.S.- EU relationship in jeopardy. By the same token, however, it would not be constructive to push for Ukrainian or Georgian membership in the EU. France understands and can deal with the U.S. position on Turkey, but the EU needs to be free to make its own decisions about its relations with Ukraine, Georgia and others, just as the U.S. determines the nature of its relations with Mexico.

10. (C) As for NATO-EU cooperation, Gourdault-Montagne continued, the EU has been active in Darfur for some 18 months and welcomes NATO involvement as a complement to the EU effort, but would object to any indication that NATO wanted to take over and give the EU directions. France continues to believe that a "NATO flag" in certain countries, like Iraq, would provoke resentment of the local population and ultimately be counterproductive. As concerns Darfur, Chadian President Deby has warned that a NATO presence would be destabilizing to the entire central African region. France believes Deby knows the region and listens to his advice, Gourdault-Montagne said. A/S Fried clarified by noting that the African Union has forces on the ground in Darfur, not NATO. NATO is playing a much needed support role. The solution to good EU-NATO cooperation is to allow each organization to do what it does best.

11. (U) A/S Fried cleared this message.
WOLFF